

# SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN.

## REPORT, 1907, 8, & 9.

Number of new branches and affiliated bodies: 1907, 57; 1908, 46; 1909, 24. Paying membership: 1907, 14,500; 1908, 16,000; 1909, 17,000; nominal membership, several thousands more. Income and expenditure of the Social-Democratic Party and branches, and its printing and publishing establishment, the Twentieth Century Press, and its boot factory, the Pioneer Boot Works: 1907, £28,500; 1908, £31,000; 1909, £29,000. Reduction in income in 1909 is due entirely to the period of bad trade which has affected most adversely the industrial districts.

As regards municipal and other local elections, the contests in 1907 gave us 66,493 votes, with a gain of 24 seats and a loss of nine; those in 1908, 55,785 votes, with a gain of 14 and a loss of 16 seats; and those in 1909, 114,191 votes, with a gain of 18 and a loss of four seats.

The sale of Socialist pamphlets and brochures at the Central Office of the S.D.P. and the Twentieth Century Press during the last three years has been 520,000. In addition, 1,504,000 Socialist manifestos and leaflets on various important public questions have been distributed. Seventy new Socialist pamphlets and brochures and reprints have been issued during the same period, among which may be mentioned—"The International" (Gustave Jaekkh), "Sixty Years in the Social-Democratic Movement" (Frederick Lessner), "Woman Suffrage" (Clara Zetkin), "The Unrest in India" (H. M. Hyndman), "The Russian Revolution" (Th. Rothstein), "The Citizen Army" (R. Edmondson), "The Triumph of the Trust under Free Trade" (H. W. Lee), "Train Talks" (E. R. Hartley), "The Position of Women in the Socialist Movement" (Dora B. Montefiore), "The Proletariat," "The Capitalist Class," "The Class Struggle," "The Socialist Commonwealth," "Ethics and the Materialist Conception of History" (Karl Kautsky), and "Value, Price and Profit" (Karl Marx). The size of our weekly organ, "Justice," has been increased, and its circulation doubled.

The usual work of Socialist propaganda and organisation has been steadily carried on. Among special activities may be mentioned the Conference of Socialist bodies and Trade



Unions on Electoral Reforms in 1908, and a similar Conference on the question of the Food Supply of the United Kingdom in 1909. Our comrade H. M. Hyndman gave evidence on Proportional Representation before the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform in June, 1909. In the winter of 1907-8 the S.D.P. set on foot a vigorous agitation in the principal industrial centres in favour of the putting into force by the various local authorities of the Education (Provision of Meals) Act dealing with the feeding of children in the schools, with the result that many of the authorities were forced to move in that direction.

The name of the Social-Democratic Federation was changed to Social-Democratic Party by a ballot of the members in 1907.

In regard to international matters, the S.D.P. gave a cordial reception to the delegates to the Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Party on May 24th, 1907. In accordance with the recommendation of the International Bureau, a number of meetings were held on July 14th, 1907, in sympathy with our Russian comrades after the dissolution of the second Duma. On July 25th, 1909, the S.D.P. gave up Trafalgar Square to the Labour Party for the purpose of holding a united Socialist and Labour demonstration, in which we participated, to protest against the visit of Nicholas II. On October 17th, the S.D.P. held in Trafalgar Square a great demonstration of indignation against the execution of Ferrer by the Spanish Government. On May 29th of this year a series of meetings of protest against the suppression of the Constitution of Finland by Russia were held in London and many cities and towns in England, Scotland and Wales.

The S.D.P. took part in three Parliamentary by-elections: North-West Manchester, April, 1908, with Dan Irving, who polled 276 votes; Haggerston, August, 1908, with Herbert Burrows, who polled 986 votes; and Newcastle-on-Tyne, September, 1908, with E. R. Hartley, who polled 2,971 votes.

The General Election, expected for some time, took place in January of this year. The candidates of the S.D.P. were: Aberdeen (North), T. Kennedy; Bradford (East), E. R. Hartley; Burnley, H. M. Hyndman; Carlisle, A. C. Bannington; Haggerston, Herbert Burrows; Northampton, H. Quelch and Jas. Gribble; Rochdale, Dan Irving; and

Sheffield (Brightside), W. Lapworth; the two latter candidates were not being supported financially from the National War Chest. Other members of the S.D.P. who stood as candidates were A. A. Purcell (West Salford), R. Small (North-West Lancark), Will Thorne (South West Ham), and Ben Tillet (Swansea). The polls were, on the whole, disappointing. With the exception of H. M. Hyndman, who increased his poll of 1906 by 16 votes, and Will Thorne, who was again returned with an increase of 1,581 votes, all the seats contested in 1906 showed a diminution in the number of votes cast for the S.D.P. candidates. In 1906 eight members of the S.D.P. polled 29,810 votes, or an average of 3,726 votes each; in 1910, thirteen members polled 32,540, or an average of 2,503 each. We regret that the candidature of our comrade J. F. Green had to be abandoned owing to our Bristol comrades not being able to receive so much help from the War Chest as they had expected; and that we had to recommend the retirement of comrade T. Lewis from Southampton owing to the local situation at the time when the retirement was advised. The Party issues raised at the elections, and the closeness of the struggle, no doubt caused numbers to regard our candidatures as hopeless, though they may have wished us success; but that only points to the difficulties against which we have to contend under our present antiquated political system.

The result of the elections, in so far as they affected our candidatures, are certainly not due entirely to our own drawbacks, whatever they may be. The candidatures of the Labour Party fared just as badly as those of our own body in three-cornered contests. It was only in straight fights with the Tories that they kept their seats; in most of their three-cornered contests they lost ground compared with the results of 1906. In seven constituencies their vote went down from a total of 29,261 in 1906 to 21,924 in 1910. Whilst paying the closest attention, therefore, to our own defects, and to the improvement of our Organisation wherever possible, we must recollect that the mass of the people outside our Organisation have also to be considered; and we must seek to find the best means of reaching them and making Socialism understood by and acceptable to them, and likewise to see what we can do to bring about or help in bringing about such democratic



changes in our political machinery as will give the people of this country some real control over their affairs if they care to exercise it, instead of the fraudulent travesty of democracy that to-day exists in these islands.

For the past twelve or thirteen years the unification of the Socialist forces in this country has been a settled portion of the policy of the Social-Democratic Party. Since the Amsterdam Congress of 1904, the S.D.P. have on several occasions approached the Independent Labour Party on the question of Socialist unity in this country. Invariably the reply received from the National Administrative Council of the Independent Labour Party has been that the means for securing united action on the part of Socialists here lies in the Labour Party. The view of the S.D.P. is quite a contrary one. We regard the question of affiliation to the Labour Party as one entirely apart from that of Socialist unity, and recent developments in the Labour Party in Parliament, which seem to us to tend more and more in the direction of an understanding with the Liberal Government, convince us that our view is the right one. We believe that there is a strong and growing feeling in favour of the joining together of the Socialist forces, and certainly such a union is exceedingly necessary here in view of the difficulties which the Socialist movement has to encounter. We have always regarded the Independent Labour Party as being the most important Socialist Organisation to be considered in connection with Socialist Unity, and we have therefore endeavoured to work harmoniously with them before trying to get together the number of local and scattered groups that exist in various parts of the country. We are glad to say that our relations with all Socialist bodies are of a perfectly friendly character, and that on several important occasions, notably on Russia, the execution of Ferrer, and Finland, we have all been able to act cordially together. We shall do everything in our power to secure the continuance and increase of this co-operation, feeling sure that such co-operation must, in the near future, bring about the unification of the Socialist forces in Great Britain and Ireland, which is absolutely necessary for the consolidation in an organised form of the progress which Socialist ideas and principles have undoubtedly made among the people of these islands.